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PRESS RELEASE

USAID-DENR-DILG MOA Signing/Launching of USAID's Environment Programs and EcoGov Project Phase 2

[JUNE 9, 2005]

(Davao, June 9, 2005). The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) today affirmed their commitment to protect the environment by signing a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Joseph A. Mussomeli witnessed as USAID Energy and Environment Chief Daniel Moore, DENR Secretary Michael Defensor and DILG Secretary Angelo Reyes signed the MOA which establishes roles and responsibilities for the implementation of programs that will strengthen the governance of forest, water and coastal resources and the management of the urban environment.

"As you all know, threats to these resources are taking their toll not only on the health of the environment, but also on the health of Filipinos, and on the economic health of the Philippines," said CDA Mussomeli. "Good governance can make a difference. But governance is not just the responsibility of those in government – it requires the active participation of ordinary citizens, who, in turn, require information and support from leaders and organizations such as those represented here today.... We must all be in this together, and stay together."

USAID's Environment Program portfolio supports the Philippine Government's thrust to conserve biodiversity and improve environmental management. Activities covered by today's MOA comprise USAID's Environmental Governance Program and Urban Environment Management Program, which are national in scope with a particular emphasis on Mindanao. Specific projects covered by the MOA include:

- EcoGov2 Project
- Environmental Justice Project;
- Partnership for Biodiversity;
- Coastal Resources and Fisheries Conservation Project;
- Sustainable Coastal Tourism in Asia-Philippines Project;
- Local Initiatives for Affordable Wastewater Treatment;
- Energy and Clean Air Project; and
- Alliance for Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy.



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In addition to the above, USAID's Environment Program supports implementation of six projects in partnership with other Philippine Government agencies to support conservation of coastal resources and fisheries, sustainable cocoa production, reduction of vehicle emissions and adoption of cleaner fuels.

At the same event, partners also launched the second phase of the Environmental Governance Project (EcoGov2), a partnership among USAID, DENR and DILG. EcoGov2 Project Chief of Party Dr. Ernie Guiang signed two MOAs with local governments that will participate in the project. Davao City is represented by Vice Mayor Luis Bonguyan and Sarangani Governor Miguel Dominguez signed MOAs marking their commitment to pursue specific natural resource management programs in partnership with DENR, DILG and other institutions.

These local governments join 83 others already working with EcoGov2 to develop and implement forest, coastal and waste management plans based on principles of transparency, accountability and community participation. Fourteen mayors representing EcoGov2 partner-LGUs in Central, Southern and Western Mindanao also attended the launch event to affirm their commitment to protecting and managing the environment and natural resources.

As it commences its second phase, EcoGov2 will continue to work with DENR, DILG and concerned agencies to help local governments and communities reduce overfishing and the use of destructive fishing practices; reduce illegal logging and conversion of natural forests; and improve the management of solid waste and wastewater.

Through its broad range of assistance, USAID expects to help reduce degradation of the environment and natural resources, implement effective and sustainable local resource management plans, and improve the life of the poor and marginalized populations who are most dependent on natural resources for their livelihood.

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